The draft bill dealing with the Trivandrum Municipality is ready and will soon be introduced in the Legislative Council. The draft of a bill dealing with the mofussil municipalities is being prepared.

61. Village Panchayats.

MR. OUSEPH MANI (*Todupuzha taluk*) requested that Village Panchayats should be established in all the *pakuthies* of the Todupuzha taluk.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Ouseph Mani, five *pakuthies* have been chosen for constituting Village Panchayats under the Village Panchayat Regulation, and provision has been made in this year's budget for contribution to the village funds. The working of these Panchayats will be watched and if they are all right and work well, the question of establishing Village Panchayats in other taluks of the State including the Todupuzha taluk will be considered.

62. Local self-government in Travancore with special reference to the Kottayam Municipal Council.

MR. ABRAHAM JOHN (*Trading Classes, Kottayam*) first spoke about the need for amending the Municipal Regulation, V of 1095. Several Sections of the Regulation required amendment. The sex disqualification attached to women for membership in Municipal Councils should be removed. Provision should be made for passing "no confidence" motions against the Presidents of the Councils. The Municipal Regulation Amendment Bill promised by the Government should be introduced without any further delay.

Certain Municipal Presidents and Municipal Councils disobeyed several directions contained in the Regulation and the bye-laws passed thereunder. Referring to the Kottayam Municipal Council, the member said that the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council were not properly recorded in the minutes book at the proper time. The resolutions passed at the meetings were not usually read out and confirmed as required by the bye-laws of the Municipality. Applications for construction of buildings were not placed before the Council. The sale deeds in connection with the purchase of land for widening the Baker road and the Eranjal road were not executed in accordance with the provisions contained in Sections 41 to 43 of the Regulation. The illegal and irregular procedure adopted had given rise to many civil and criminal cases in the Kottayam Municipality during the past four years. Nearly Rs. 2,000 had already been spent by the Municipality to defend the civil and criminal cases during a short period of 4 years.

In 1096, taxes under sub-sections 2 to 5 of Section 61 were imposed in the Kottayam Municipality. But no bye-laws had been passed regularising the levy of the above taxes. In the Municipality, persons were assessed according to the whims and fancies of the Municipal executive. The assessment lists of profession and of vehicle taxes were not placed before the Council. Intimation of assessment was not given

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to the parties in time. The arrears in the Municipality were more than 80 to 90 per cent. of the total demand. The powers vested under the Revenue Recovery Regulation were seldom resorted to owing to the fear of detection of the irregularities in assessment.

From 1103 onwards, the Account Officer was detecting systematic defalcations year after year in the Kottayam Municipality. The President was not bold enough to take action even against a single subordinate concerned in these defalcations. The rate-payers expected the Government to set right all these irregularities.

For efficient and prompt executive work and supervision of office and out-door work a chief executive officer was absolutely necessary in the Kottayam Municipality. The present non-official chairman seldom went to the Municipal Office. Acknowledgment receipts for money remitted to the Municipality were granted only 4 or 5 days after the remittance. If the entire executive was detached from the President, he could get sufficient time to shape, guide and direct the Municipal affairs. The appointment might be made as an experimental measure for 2 or 3 years. A sum amounting to Rs. 100 per mensum was being disbursed by the Kottayam Municipality under allowances. These allowances could be conveniently abolished and the amount utilised to meet the salary of the executive officer.

Lastly, the member said that there were many instances of abuse of powers and neglect of duties by the President of the Kottayam Municipality. A particular G. O. of the Government dated the 10th October 1930 was brought to the notice of the Council only in October 1931 and even that only after a Councillor had applied for a copy of the same. He, appointed in Municipal service dismissed and convicted persons. Lands required for the Municipality were purchased and the price for the same disbursed by the President without the knowledge of the Council. The inordinate delay in the submission of the Administration Report, the budget and other reports due to the Government would also show that something was wrong with the Municipality There was loss, waste and misappropriation of Municipal revenue in many cases. An enquiry should be conducted about these at a very early date.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. John, your suggestion about having a chief executive officer will be considered when the draft Bill dealing with mofussil municipalities comes up before Government.

Several petitions have come in about the affairs of the Kottayam Municipality and they have been or will be enquired into. The Account Officer is enquiring into the alleged defalcation. I should like to point out that, if the Chairman is doing all these bad things, it is up to the Councillors to pass a vote of "no confidence"; but that has not been done. Anyhow, the affairs of the Kottayam Municipality are being enquired into.

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